

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002866

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [IN](#) [PK](#) [INDO](#) [PAK](#)

SUBJECT: INDIA UPBEAT ON MUSHARRAF MINI-SUMMIT, BUT KEEPING EXPECTATIONS LOW

REF: A. NEW DELHI 2862

[1](#)B. NEW DELHI 2631

[1](#)C. NEW DELHI 1736

Classified By: PolCouns Geoff Pyatt, for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: India is expecting a successful April 16-18 visit by the Pakistan President, largely because Musharraf has laid out positive and realistic goals that mesh with New Delhi's. The Reuters interview he gave on the eve of his departure was music to India's ears, and was taken here as an indication that Musharraf wants to bury his reputation as a commando who prefers tactical political maneuvers over building a mature relationship with India. Still, bearing in mind the disastrous Agra summit, the GOI has tried to keep expectations low, explaining that the criteria for a successful visit will not be signed accords but incremental improvement in a warming bilateral relationship. The GOI, from the Foreign Minister down, has accepted that Kashmir will be on the agenda, and the LOC bus is a success for which both sides can claim credit, but Musharraf will also hear the reaffirmation of the Indian mantra that there can be no further partitions. End Summary.

Saying What India Wanted to Hear

[1](#)2. (C) Musharraf's April 14 Reuters interview has had a major impact on Indian expectations for his visit -- he said what India wanted to hear. A list of sound bites that resonated particularly well include:

-- A good-natured remark that he hopes his Delhi trip "doesn't turn out like Agra," a reference to the disastrous July 2001 summit.

-- His reference to transforming the LOC into a "soft border," a concept that Manmohan Singh and others in the GOI have long pushed;

-- Positive statements on CBMs, including expanding cross-LOC transportation links; and

-- Publicly setting expectations low for his official meetings ("If we strike some common ground ... that is the maximum one can expect").

India Seeing "A Different General"

[1](#)3. (C) Many Delhi-based Pakistan-watchers have admitted to us that their perceptions of Musharraf have changed markedly since 2001. References to Musharraf as "the architect of Kargil" who anointed himself President just prior to the Agra Summit have largely been replaced by grudging characterizations of him as an emerging statesman with whom "India can do business," as PM Singh said after their September meeting on the sidelines of the UNGA. Our interlocutors say that the 17-month-long cross-LOC cease-fire, his positive meetings in 2004 with Prime Ministers Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, the dramatic decreases in (though not elimination of) Kashmir-oriented terrorism and cross-border infiltration, a dip in Kashmir-related demagoguery, and progress on CBMs including the successful launch of the cross-LOC bus (Ref B), have been key in their reassessment. In a recent meeting with the Ambassador (Ref A), Natwar Singh warmly credited Musharraf for defying those in the GOP establishment who opposed the Kashmir bus.

[1](#)4. (C) Musharraf's interview has helped to further change his image in the Indian mind. For example, veteran strategist C. Raja Mohan commented on April 15 that "A Different General Returns to a Transformed India." "Hindustan Times" Associate Editor Vinod Sharma added that the interview was "a happy augury" of changing perceptions from Musharraf as "a swashbuckling general to a Head of State working for peace." Sharma also pointed out to Poloff that Musharraf's dispatching of his mother, brother and son as "an advance team" went a long way to "soften his image."

[1](#)5. (C) Indian commentators are expecting that Musharraf will avoid what the pro-BJP "Pioneer" has characterized as "the potential of the wily General to spring surprises: ugly ones like Agra, uncomfortable ones like the Kathmandu handshake

(at the January 2002 SAARC summit), or googlies like his (October 2004) Kashmir formula." Although an aide to PM Singh told the "Times of India" that the GOI hopes Musharraf will "resist the temptation of playing to the galleries back home," and Natwar Singh visibly cringed when predicting to the Ambassador Musharraf's Kashmir pitch (Ref A), GOI Kashmir Interlocutor NN Vohra acknowledged to DAS Gastright and D/PolCouns on April 13 that India accepts Musharraf's need to maintain a somewhat hard line on Kashmir "for his domestic politics."

#### GOI Managing Expectations

16. (C) The GOI has been assiduously attempting to lower expectations of a diplomatic breakthrough during this visit, with PM Manmohan Singh stressing that it will be "not a state visit but an informal one," although President Kalam will host a lunch in Musharraf's honor and the PM will host a dinner. "We don't want unnecessary hype, we want a meaningful and substantial meeting," PM Media Adviser Sanjaya Baru shared on April 14.

17. (C) The GOI mantra characterizing this visit has been a repeat of the formulation used for Natwar Singh's February 15-17 trip to Islamabad, "expect neither a breakthrough nor a breakdown." This theme carried into NSA Narayanan's April 10 comment on "Star News" that the important outcome would be an improvement in bilateral relations "by even some percentage points." Vohra echoed this notion by suggesting that Musharraf should look for "small steps (i.e. CBMs) we can take without falling down."

#### Predicting the Agenda

18. (C) Indian press reports that Musharraf's entourage could be as large as 50 with a half dozen Cabinet ministers, suggesting that the GOI may need to be prepared to respond to a significant offer if he makes one. The Pakistani media cadre, said to number over 30, has led to speculation that a special announcement is planned (Natwar also brought a large press contingent with him to Pakistan for the February 16 Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus announcement).

19. (C) NSA Narayanan told reporters on April 15 that in addition to discussing Kashmir, the GOI would recommend new CBMs in the form of more cross-LOC bus routes and facilitating reunions for divided Kashmiri families, items that have been on New Delhi's agenda for months but which may have found new life following the successful Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus launch. Indo-Pakistan watchers speculate that the time may also be ripe to open the Khokhrapar-Munnabao road linking Rajasthan and Sindh while work progresses on opening the rail link between those cities by October (Ref C). Dissecting what it claimed was the entourage list, which included the Defense Secretary and the Ministers of State for Religious and Youth Affairs, the "Pioneer" has predicted that Siachen Glacier and new people-to-people CBMs may feature on the agenda.

110. (C) Less speculation is required to know who Musharraf will meet with. In addition to the expected events and discussions with PM Singh and FM Natwar Singh, Musharraf will meet President APJ Kalam and Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi, as well as former PM Vajpayee and Opposition Leader and former Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani. Separate Hurriyat factions plan to meet with Musharraf on April 17 -- first the moderates, then the pro-Pakistan hardliner SAS Geelani, who is increasingly isolated in his criticism of Indo-Pak rapprochement, including the cross-LOC bus service.

#### Comment

111. (C) By disposing one of the GOI's biggest fears for the cricket summit -- a replay of Agra -- Musharraf set the stage for what is widely expected to be a useful visit. As with other recent steps forward in Indo-Pak relations, this visit was initially opposed by the MEA bureaucracy, which was forced to go along after PM Media Adviser Sanjaya Baru announced in late March that the Pakistani President would be welcome to visit. Indo-Pak summits usually are accompanied by intense anticipation of a significant breakthrough, but Musharraf's echoing of GOI efforts to keep expectations low suggests that, even absent major deliverables, this mini-summit will not be deemed a failure, at least as viewed from Delhi.

BLAKE